



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 20, 2016

Agenda Item: First Peoples Buffalo Jump Prairie Dog Management Plan/EA

Division: Parks

Action Needed: Approval for Public Releases of Environmental Assessment

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background; Montana State Parks proposes to manage the black-tailed prairie dog population at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park in order to protect cultural, archeological, and heritage resources at the park. Black-tailed prairie dog colonies are causing damage to these resources at the park. Designated a National Historical Landmark by the National Park Service in 2015 after decades of research, First Peoples Buffalo Jump contains outstanding heritage resources, and their protection is the highest priority of the park. From 2005, when mapping of colonies began, to 2014 there has been a 116% increase in total acreage occupied by prairie dogs including the addition of 5 new colonies. Where prairie dogs and cultural resources overlap at First Peoples, their activity moves and buries rock cairns, teepee rings, and other significant artifacts. MSP proposes to control prairie dogs where these impacts are occurring.

Public Involvement Process & Results; For this EA the public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the proposed action and alternatives: One statewide press release; Direct mailings of cover letter and preface to the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board, and a list of stakeholders comprised of individuals and agencies that may have a particular interest in this proposal. Legal notice soliciting public review and comment will be posted in the *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*, and *Cascade Courier* newspapers. Public notice on the Montana State Parks web page: <http://stateparks.mt.gov>.

Alternatives and Analysis; The alternative to not approving the release of this EA to the public would delay and/or inhibit the management actions proposed in the EA. This could result in continued damage to the heritage and cultural resources at the park.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale; Montana State Parks recommends that the Board approves release of this Environmental Assessment to the public for review and comment in order to move forward with the management options for controls outlined in the plan and prevent further damage or loss of artifacts in the park.

Proposed Motion; I move that the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board approve the release of this Management Plan/ Environmental Assessment to the public for comment for a period of 21 days.